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TARUN GOGOI APRIL 1, 1936 • NOVEMBER 23, 2020

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CONGRESS VETERAN TARUN GOGOI PASSES AWAY AT 84

The three-time chief minister of Assam was undergoing treatment for post-Covid complications in Guwahati

'NO PROBLEM' WAS HIS FAVOURITE ONE-LINER

Gogoi, who saw himself among a tough breed of politicians who do not dither while making decisions, often told his team members that his guiding mantra in all that he did was: "no problem". Explaining it in his memoir *Turnaround*, the Congress stalwart said if one "approaches the negative in a positive manner, things automatically fall into place" P9

BROUGHT ULFA TO THE TALKS TABLE

- As Assam's chief minister for 15 years from 2001, Gogoi is widely credited for pulling the state from the edge of bankruptcy and putting it on the path of development
- The six-time MP will also be remembered for bringing various militant outfits, including the ULFA, to the negotiation table

PM

CALLS GOGOI A POPULAR LEADER AND A VETERAN ADMINISTRATOR

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Schools, PU colleges won't open in Dec

Technical Advisory Committee to meet in third week of next month to decide on academic year

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE State Government has decided not to reopen schools and pre-university colleges in December. The decision was announced on Monday by Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar, less than a week after the higher education department reopened degree colleges on November 17.

The decision was based on a report by the Covid-19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) constituted by Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, which took into consideration the spike in cases in Delhi, Haryana, Gujarat and Rajasthan, and noted that the winter months of December-January would be conducive to the spread of respiratory infections.

Education Minister Suresh Kumar at a meeting on reopening of schools in Bengaluru

Covid situation will be reviewed towards December-end to consider reopening of schools post-December

Suresh Kumar, Education Minister

Besides, the epidemiological perspective based on a Covid survey done in the state in September is that there may be a spike in Covid cases in districts that have recorded low infection spread now.

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar said it is not advisable to reopen schools and PU colleges anytime soon. "We need to consider the possibility of a second wave of Coronavirus hitting the country. The matter was discussed at the technical advisory committee meeting and the government has been informed of the decision," he said.

Suresh Kumar said that the Covid situation will be reviewed towards December-end to consider reopening of schools post-December. The TAC will meet in the third week of December to decide on a road map for the academic year, as the education department is looking at a phased reopening of schools, starting with older students of Class 8 and above.

The state has 9,59,566 Class 10 students of state, CBSE and ICSE boards, and 5,70,126 pre-university students. A decision on exam dates too has to be taken and it will be done after a discussion among officials.

Suresh Kumar said that Class 10 students would have completed 100 per cent of their syllabus in December as classes are being aired on state-run television channel Doordarshan Chandana.

The TAC, at its 52nd meeting on Covid on Sunday, decided to recommend to the state government to postpone reopening of schools and not to do so at least in December. P2

India's best shot at covid vaccine has 70% efficacy

EEXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

OF all the big Covid vaccine efficacy reports, the one India was keen to hear about has just arrived. Swedish-British biotech firm AstraZeneca on Monday announced that Covishield, its vaccine candidate developed along with the University of Oxford, showed an average efficacy of 70% in two study segments in early phase 3 of testing.

Though the performance percentage is lower than that of its three competitors — US pharma majors Pfizer and Moderna, and Russia's Sputnik V claimed 90+% efficacy — the Oxford vaccine scores over the rest for India as it can be stored at a comfortable 2-8°C; the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) is already manufacturing it; priced around ₹200 per dose to the government, it's cost effective; and it is possibly the first Covid-19 vaccine India can lay its hands on.

Of the 11,636 volunteers in Astra's initial test, 131 developed coronavirus, but did not need hospitalisation. CONTINUED ON: P10

Oxford shot rate for govt around ₹200

While the cost of the Oxford vaccine is expected to be about ₹220 per dose under the government's national immunisation programme, its market price could be higher, Serum Institute of India chief Adar Poonawala has already indicated.

Maha firewall for passengers from 4 states

Mumbai: With a fresh wave of Covid building on the horizon, Maharashtra sought to raise its firewall, mandating travellers from the most-affected states of Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa to show a Covid-19 negative certificate on arrival by rail, road and air from Wednesday. As per a Standard Operating Procedure issued by the state government, all travelers must undergo an RT-PCR test within 72 hours of the scheduled arrival time in Maharashtra. "The passengers not having the negative test report will have to undertake a Covid-19 test at their own cost. The airport authority will arrange the testing centres and charge the passengers directly," stated the notification.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa comes out of Vidhana Soudha after presenting the CM's medal to officers of state Forests, Wildlife and Environment Department | SHIVAKUMAR

Veerashaiva-Lingayat board to get ₹500 cr

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE State Government on Monday issued a formal order constituting the Karnataka Veerashaiva-Lingayat Development Corporation with an allocation of Rs 500 crore, even as the debate on constituting development boards for different communities continued.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa had earlier announced the government's decision to constitute the corporation after community leaders, including ministers, demanded it. While the Backward Classes Welfare Department will take care of the initial expenditure, the government will allocate Rs 500 crore to take up initiatives to help "economically, socially and educationally backward" people from the community.

Veerashaiva-Lingayat is a politically influential community, especially in North Karnataka. Yediyurappa, Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi and a number of ministers in the cabinet are from the community.

Sources in the Chief Minister's Office said that ₹500 crore may not be allocated at once but over a period of time. As per the government order, the corporation will be registered under the Companies Act, 2013. The responsibility of preparing a "Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association, seeking approval from the state government and registering it with the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs" has been entrusted to the commissioner, Backward Classes Welfare Department.

The government's decision to constitute development corporations is seen as an attempt to woo various communities and has been questioned by opposition Congress leaders. They have accused the government of not providing funds to development corporations for backward classes that were constituted earlier. One such decision to constitute Maratha Development Board has come under fire from pro-Kannada organisations that have called for state bandh on December 5. P6

EXPRESS READ

B'luru air cleaner than other cities after Diwali

Bengaluru: The city had the best air quality after Diwali, in comparison to seven other cities, according to an analysis by an environmental intelligence company Ambee. Bengaluru's Air Quality Index ranged between 50 and 70. P2

New Covid therapy to the rescue

Bengaluru: Thymosin Alpha 1, a new therapy, can modulate the immune system of Covid patients and help their recovery. In mild patients, it stops the patient's condition from becoming moderate or severe, and helps severe patients in recovering. P3

HUMOUR GONE WRONG

A sticky issue: Yakshagana fans, artistes angry over advertisement

VINCENT D'SOUZA @Mangaluru

THIS one failed to stick. A new TV commercial of Fevicol, featuring Yakshagana — the traditional, popular art form from the coastal region, has created a storm in social media circuits. Terming it 'disrespectful' and 'poor portrayal of the tradition', artistes and fans of Yakshagana have demanded an apology from the company and withdrawal of the commercial.

The ad shows Yakshagana artistes and Bhagavatas, who narrate the story, involved in a scuffle on the stage after the king's throne breaks when he sits on it.

The protest against the ad started with Mangaluru South MLA Vedavyas Kamath putting up a Facebook post with #apologize. He said, "Yakshagana is a centuries-old tradition of Tulunad. Your Company mocking it is distasteful. It is our Culture and we give it PRIME respect. The AD has to be removed and your company should apologize for disrespecting Yakshagana. Do check on the internet on how we treat the amazing dance form."

A screen grab of the advertisement

M Devanand Bhat, founder of Sri Yakshagana Mitrakala Mandali said, "The ad affects people's belief and devotion in the art form. Yakshagana is not just entertainment, but also a form of worship. People running around on the stage with Chande and Maddale is not right."

Bhat is also not happy with Yakshagana being featured in films, Navarathri festivities and Republic Day parades. "In such shows, artistes in full costume (vesha) and gejje (anklet) are seen wearing footwear. Many think such events give exposure to the art form. But why do we need such exposure at the cost of sanctity," he asked.

Yakshagana Bhagavata Patla Sathish Shetty, however, welcomed the ad, but said showing disrespect to the art is not acceptable.

RAJAN ROASTS CORPORATE BANK IDEA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

FORMER RBI governor Raghuram Rajan on Monday ripped apart the banking regulator's latest proposal to allow large business houses to float banks, saying chances of misuse is very high because of 'self-lending opportunities'. "Industrial houses need financing, and they can get it easily, with no questions asked, if they have an in-house bank. The history of such connected lending is invariably disastrous — how can the bank make good loans when it is owned by the borrower?" he asked in a note written jointly with RBI's former deputy governor Viral Acharya. The note, titled 'Do we really need Indian corporations in banking' and published on LinkedIn, warned that such a move will "further exacerbate the concentration of economic (and political) power in certain business houses".

Raghuram Rajan

RBI has till now been opposed to letting business houses run banks given India's history of the 1950s and 1960s when a number of banks run by big industrial houses went under after a spate of connected loans were doled out.

A major private sector lender ICICI Bank is facing a probe over loans given to connected parties. RBI recently ordered the merger of Lakshmi Vilas Bank with DBS Bank. Rajan and Acharya said the latest proposal by RBI gives undue advantage to large business houses that already have the initial capital that has to be put up. "Moreover, highly indebted and politically connected business houses will have the greatest incentive and ability to push for licences. That will increase the importance of money power yet more in our politics, and make us more likely to succumb to authoritarian cronyism," they warned.

Independent probe needed into Akshaya Patra: MLC

ENS @Bengaluru

BJP MLC Lahar Singh Siroya has said that an independent inquiry panel should look into the allegations made against the Akshaya Patra Foundation by its former trustees. He suggested that the chairman of APF and ISKCON Bengaluru, Madhu Pandit Dasa, should hand over the management of the mid-day meal programme to an independent administrator till the probe is completed.

The MLC said there could be a conflict of interest if the two-member panel, headed by former Chief Vigilance Commissioner K V Chowdary, conducts an inquiry, as Chowdary and the other member of the panel, M S Unni Krishnan, former MD and CEO of Thermax, were appointed as non-executive trustees of the APF board when it was reconstituted recently. P4

Santhosh meets BSY, discusses ministry

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

BJP National General Secretary BL Santhosh on Monday met CM BS Yediyurappa at his residence here, and the two leaders held discussions privately.

They are likely to have discussed cabinet expansion, inclusion of new members and dropping a few ministers, the party bypoll strategy and bills to be passed during the session, sources said.

The CM is waiting for the high command's approval for ministry expansion, but the leadership is taking time to ensure there is no regional imbalance in the cabinet. P4

Kerala won't pass police act

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ T'Puram

UNDER fire from various corners, including national-level leaders and Left sympathisers, the CPM-led Kerala government on Monday said it would not enforce the controversial provisions in the Kerala Police Act amendment ordinance, signed by Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Saturday.

CM Pinarayi Vijayan said any further action would be taken only after discussing it in the Assembly and collecting feedback from the public.

Section 118 (A), which has been incorporated in the Kerala Police Act, mandates jail term for offensive social media posts. P7

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